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Lydia Sigourney House
Hartford, Connecticut

HABS No. Conn. 24

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Connecticut

Historic American Buildings Survey
Harold H. Davis, District Officer
29 Whitney Avenue, New Haven, Conn.

LYDIA SIGOURNEY HOUSE

HARTFORD, HARTFORD COUNTY, CONNECTICUT

Owner: City of Hartford, Hartford, Connecticut

Date of Erection: 1820

Architect and Builder: Charles Sigourney

Present Condition: Very poor. In way of modern development.

Number of Stories: Three stories and attic

Materials of Construction: Brick walls
Stone foundations
Flat roof covered with tin

Other Existing Records: Colonial Dames Series: "Old Houses
of Connecticut".

List of Photographs:

1. Southeast Elevation
2. Southwest Elevation

LYDIA SIGOURNEY HOUSE
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Charles Sigourney built this house in 1820. He was born in Boston in 1778. His father, a Boston merchant, had him educated in Hampstead, England, after which he was in his father's office until he came to Hartford in 1799 and opened a hardware store. In 1821 he was chosen the second president of the Phoenix Bank.

He was instrumental in the founding of Washington College, now Trinity College. In 1819 he married Lydia Huntley who published her first book "Moral Pieces in Prose and Verse" which was followed by nearly sixty volumes, selections from which were reprinted in England in 1848, under the name of the "Coronal".

Mrs. Sigourney in her "Letters of Life" gives a description of the house: "Facing the east, its stately columns caught the first rays of the rising sun as they unveiled, like a picture, the city stretching at its feet. The interior, with its lofty ceilings, marble mantelpieces, folding doors and windows reaching to the floor, had a patrician aspect, more noticeable half a century since than now, when such appendages are common. It was environed by an extensive lawn, whose curving gravel walks were adorned with shrubbery and spacious gardens, one of which stretched towards to the fair river that girdled the domain from which it was protected by a mural parapet. A long line of buildings stretched in the rear of the mansion, unmarked by ornament, yet of pleasing architectural proportion, the classic taste of my husband being obvious in the slightest details, every part of this establishment from the basement to the capitals of the columns, having been executed after a model drawn by himself. Having been so thoughtful of comfort as to wish the coolness of an abode in summer not invaded by the fumes and odors of culinary preparation, he erected a wing which contained a large secondary kitchen, which having also every convenience for a laundry, was constantly used for that purpose. There was also a fine room for a dairy, and chamber for the shelter of any wayfaring man who might wish to tarry for the night."

With the exception of President Washington and President Polk, every president of the United States called upon Mrs. Sigourney. She died in 1865, eleven years after her husband.

The Sigourney property was purchased in 1836 by Daniel Buck for \$2,200; in 1838, Mr. Buck sold the property to Julius Catlin. The house was leased by the City of Hartford in 1909 for school purposes.

The model from which the house was built is still in the possession of one of Mr. Catlin's descendants. Many of its best features were chosen and used in the design for the Connecticut House at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition at St. Louis.

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Source of Information: Colonial Dames Series: "Old Houses of
Connecticut"

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MD 9/14/57